STAR WARS
DARTH VADER
MARVEL
012
SOULE
CAMUNCOLI
ORLANDINI
CURIEL

THE RULE OF FIVE

Part II

The Galactic Empire's reign has just begun. Darth Vader, Sith apprentice to Emperor Palpatine, has been tasked with leading the Inquisitorius to hunt down and kill the few surviving members of the former Jedi Order.

After tracking a report of a supposed Force user sighting to Cabarria, Darth Vader encounters what he discovers to be a trap. Mercenaries have been given a target – and that target is a Sith Lord.

Proving no match for Darth Vader, the mercenaries reveal that the hit on the Sith came from the highest order of the Imperial Capital of Coruscant. His pursuit to eliminate all potential threats continues....

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"LORD VADER..."
...I HAVE THE ANALYSIS YOU REQUESTED.
SPEAK.
THE KILL CONTRACT AGAINST YOU WAS SENT FROM THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE IMPERIAL EXECUTIVE BUILDING, WHICH INCLUDE THE OFFICES OF EMPEROR PALPATINE.
THERE IS A 97 PERCENT PROBABILITY THE SIGNAL ORIGINATED THERE. I SEE NO EVIDENCE OF SLICING.
I SEE.

PROVIDE ME A LIST OF ALL INDIVIDUALS WITH ACCESS CODES TO IMPERIAL SYSTEMS AT LEVEL 1A1 AND ABOVE.
ACCESSING.
SENDING DATA.
HNH...
KLK
GOOD.

The Galactic Core.
"JUST DROPPED OUT OF LIGHTSPEED, LORD VADER."
SHOULD BE DOWN ON CORUSCANT SOON.
DO NOT DELAY, NINTH SISTER.
DON'T DELAY? LIKE I'M GONNA SPEND EVEN ONE SECOND MORE THAN I HAVE TO STUCK ON THIS SHIP WITH YOU.
WHAT A PIECE OF P--
EEEEOOOEEEEOOO
UH-OH.
LORD VADER. WE...UH...WE MAY HAVE A PROBLEM.

ORBITAL DEFENSE IS ASKING FOR AUTHORIZATION CODES, BUT SOMETHING'S JAMMING OUR COMMS.
I CAN'T TRANSMIT!
CORUSCANT SECURITY HAS TAGGED US AS AN ACTIVE THREAT--THIS SHIP'S TRANSPONDER HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS PART OF A SEPARATIST SPLINTER CELL.
IF WE DO NOT SEND OUR CODES, THEY WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY--
--ATTACK.
MOVE.

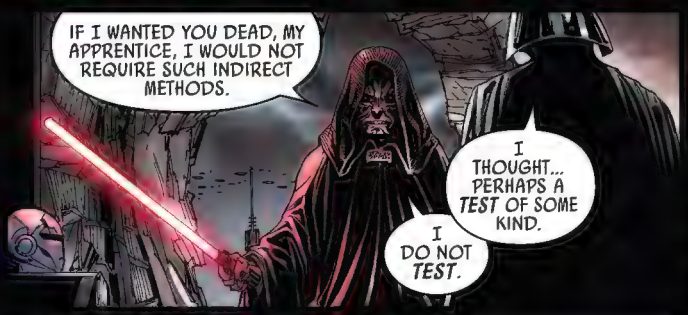
VADER...PLEASE TELL ME YOU HAVE SOME DARK SIDE TRICK YOU CAN PULL.
NO TRICKS.
SKILL.
OH, BLAST.

KRRRCK
SCREEEEEE
I...
...HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS.

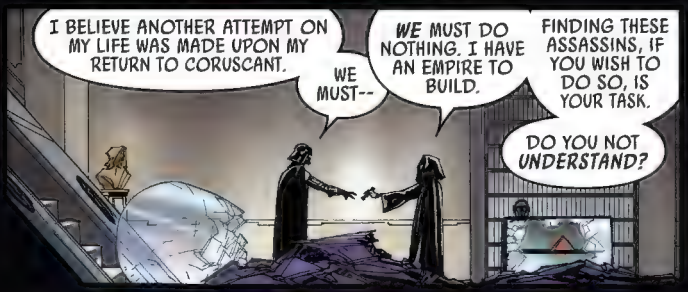
The Former Jedi Temple.
AH, VADER...
...WHILE I WOULD NOT CALL YOUR BATTLE WITH JOCASTA NU A VICTORY, MY APPRENTICE...
...I CANNOT CALL IT A DEFEAT.
THE ARTIFACTS THAT CURSED WOMAN HOARDED HERE ARE FASCINATING. TOOLS OF THE JEDI AND SITH ALIKE--WINDOWS INTO THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE FORCE.
BUT I SENSE YOU DO NOT WISH TO SPEAK OF ANCIENT THINGS, LORD VADER.
NO. I DO NOT.

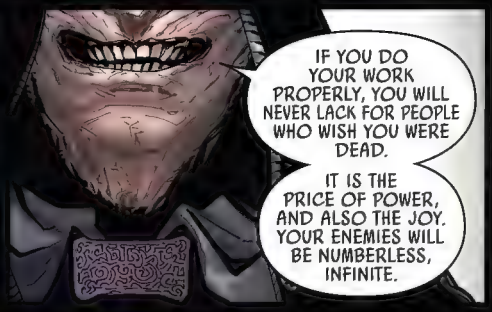
I ACCOMPANIED THE INQUISITOR NINTH SISTER TO CABARRIA TO INVESTIGATE A JEDI SIGHTING.
WHILE THERE, I WAS ATTACKED BY MERCENARIES. I WAS THE TARGET OF A KILL ORDER.
THE CONTRACT ORIGINATED HERE-- SENT FROM THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT.
THE HIGHEST?
YES. DID IT COME FROM YOU?
I SEE YOU HAVE REBUILT YOUR LIGHTSABER, LORD VADER.
MAY I SEE IT?

SSK
YES. AN IMPROVEMENT, I THINK. THE HILT YOU TOOK FROM MASTER INFIL'A DID NOT SUIT.


IF I WANTED YOU DEAD, MY APPRENTICE, I WOULD NOT REQUIRE SUCH INDIRECT METHODS.
I THOUGHT... PERHAPS A *TEST* OF SOME KIND.
I DO NOT *TEST*.

SSK
I *TEACH*.


I BELIEVE ANOTHER ATTEMPT ON MY LIFE WAS MADE UPON MY RETURN TO CORUSCANT.
WE MUST--
WE MUST DO NOTHING. I HAVE AN EMPIRE TO BUILD.
FINDING THESE ASSASSINS, IF YOU WISH TO DO SO, IS YOUR TASK.
DO YOU NOT *UNDERSTAND?*


IF YOU DO YOUR WORK PROPERLY, YOU WILL NEVER LACK FOR PEOPLE WHO WISH YOU WERE DEAD.
IT IS THE PRICE OF POWER, AND ALSO THE JOY. YOUR ENEMIES WILL BE NUMBERLESS, INFINITE.

AND SO YOU WILL NEVER LACK FOR PEOPLE TO DESTROY.

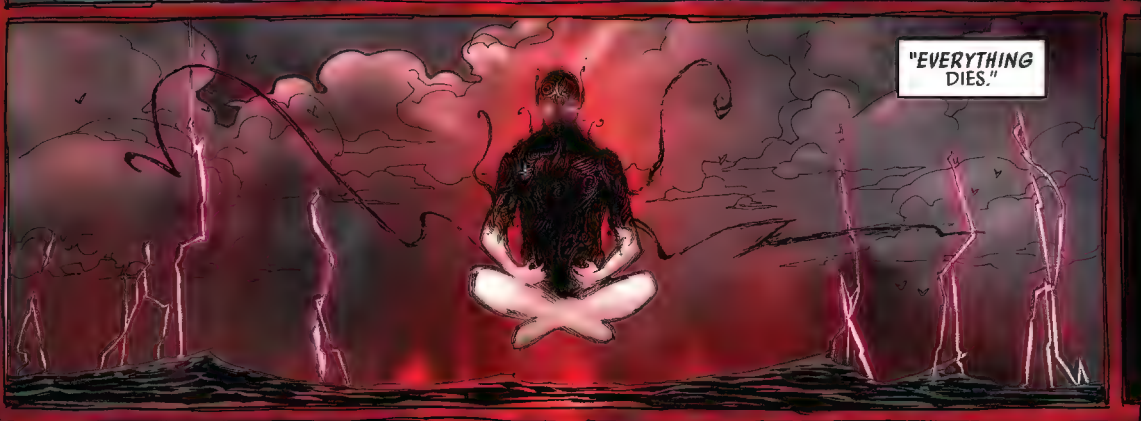
Uscru District.
The Room of Masks.
I HAVE UNFORTUNATE NEWS.
"OUR QUARRY SURVIVED."

AGAIN? WHO IS THIS MAN?
WELL, THAT'S THE PROBLEM, ISN'T IT?
WE DON'T KNOW WHO HE IS.
SETTING UP THE MERCENARY CONTRACT FROM THE EMPEROR'S OFFICE DIDN'T WORK EITHER? NO MISTRUST? NO DRAMATIC ACCUSATIONS?
NOT AS FAR AS I CAN TELL. VADER WAS SEEN WITH PALPATINE AFTER HE RETURNED TO CORUSCANT. EVERYTHING SEEMED NORMAL.
EITHER HE WAS TOO STUPID TO FIND THE TRAIL WE LEFT, OR...THEY CAME TO AN ACCOMMODATION.
BAH. I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
"WHAT IS IT BETWEEN THOSE TWO?"

PALPATINE ELEVATES THIS PERSON OUT OF NOWHERE, TELLS US NOTHING ABOUT HIM, LETS HIM ACT WITH NO RESTRICTIONS WHATSOEVER--IT'S NOT RIGHT.
IS HE A SERVANT? HIS BODYGUARD?
SOMETHING MORE, I THINK. THE EMPEROR GAVE HIM CONTROL OF THAT BIZARRE INQUISITOR PROGRAM, AFTER ALL.
IT DOESN'T MATTER. WE CAN'T STOP NOW. HE HAS TO GO. EVERYTHING WILL BECOME SO MUCH CLEARER ONCE HE'S GONE. EASIER TO MANAGE.

"BUT HOW? IF HE'S SURVIVED SO FAR..."

HE'S GOOD, OR HE'S LUCKY, OR HE'S BOTH. FINE.
WE'LL TRY AGAIN. AND AGAIN, AND AGAIN, IF WE HAVE TO.
EVENTUALLY, HE'LL DIE.


"EVERYTHING DIES."

HNH.

YOU ARE CERTAIN?

I AM.
IT IS HAPPENING BECAUSE THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND. THEY KNOW I HAVE STRENGTH. THEY DO NOT KNOW I HAVE POWER.
YOUR POWER.
AND YOU SEE NO OTHER WAY?

NO. YOU TOLD ME YOU DO NOT WISH TO RULE OVER AN EMPIRE OF THE DEAD--BUT THERE MUST BE CONSEQUENCES.
EITHER I TAKE SOME, OR I TAKE THEM ALL.

VERY WELL. ANY BUT TARKIN. I REQUIRE HIM.

YES, MY MASTER.

YOU ARE THE ELITE OFFICERS OF MY IMPERIAL MILITARY.
YOU WILL FORM THE CORE OF OUR EFFORTS TO TRANSFORM THIS GALAXY INTO A PLACE OF PEACE, STABILITY AND PROSPERITY FOR ALL.
STILL, I UNDERSTAND THAT OUR SHARED VISION REMAINS NEW, AND PERHAPS SOME ELEMENTS OF THE HIERARCHY REMAIN UNCLEAR.
IT IS TIME TO ELIMINATE ANY CONFUSION.

THIS IS LORD VADER.
HE SPEAKS WITH MY VOICE. A COMMAND FROM HIM IS AS A COMMAND FROM ME.
PASS THIS INFORMATION DOWN TO YOUR MEN. ALL MUST UNDERSTAND.
FERRO. BINGAN. STREPHI. AZORAS.

BAROKKI.
STEP FORWARD.
TWO ATTEMPTS HAVE BEEN MADE ON MY LIFE. EVIDENCE SUGGESTS A CONSPIRACY WITHIN THE IMPERIAL OFFICER CORPS.
I DO NOT YET KNOW THE PRECISE INDIVIDUALS BEHIND THESE ATTEMPTS...
...ALTHOUGH I HAVE MY SUSPICIONS.
IT DOES NOT MATTER. I WILL ALWAYS SURVIVE.
EVERY TIME, I WILL SURVIVE.
BUT FIVE OF YOU, CHOSEN AT RANDOM...

...WILL NOT.

KRRRCK

DARTH VADER
NEXT ISSUE: